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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
NATIONAL FOREIGN ASSESSMENT CENTER

5 March 1980

MEMORANDUM

ANTI-SEMITISM IN ARGENTINA

SUMMARY

Reports of anti-Semitic attitudes among some elements of the Argentine security forces appear valid. It would be wrong, however, to assume that these attitudes constitute official government policy. [redacted] 3.5(c)

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The present military government in Argentina guarantees religious freedom and maintains officially correct relations with the organized Argentine Jewish community. Nevertheless, an increase in traditional Argentine anti-Semitism coincided with the fall of the Peron government in 1976. That year, a number of synagogues were bombed and numerous anti-Semitic publications appeared on newsstands. The government responded by closing down the publishing houses responsible for the anti-Semitic material. Following these incidents junta President Videla met with Jewish and other religious leaders to assure them that his government still supported religious freedom. A leading rabbi who attended the meeting said afterward that he hoped that "the peace and understanding we found at the President's table are a reflection of what is to come for Argentina." [redacted] 3.5(c)

Terrorist violence over the past decade has caused both the former civilian and current military governments to

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This paper was written for Robert Gallagher, Deputy Director of the Office of Intelligence Liaison at Commerce Department [redacted] *International Issues Division, Office of Political Analysis. It was coordinated with the Latin America Division of OPA. Comments are welcome and should be addressed to Chief, Political-Social Issues Branch, International Issues Division, OPA.* [redacted]

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maintain a "state of siege." As violence mounted, government security forces employed harsh and brutal methods to deny public support to the guerrillas and crush the revolution. During this period thousands of "political prisoners" were detained or caused to "disappear"--presumably murdered--by security forces. Various human rights organizations have speculated on the number of persons abducted by Argentine security forces between 1976 and 1979 and still unaccounted for. Estimates range from a low of 6,500 by the Permanent Assembly for Human Rights in Buenos Aires to a high of 20,000 by Amnesty International. A portion of these victims were Jewish and recent reports by survivors indicate that they were interrogated for their religious beliefs as well as for their political convictions. [ ] 3.5(c)

Further charges of anti-Semitism occurred as a result of the arrest and detention of liberal publisher Jacobo Timerman in 1977. Timerman attracted attention through his newspaper La Opinion which reflected Peronist views and was judged hostile to the military government. Timerman spent nearly two years in detention despite the ruling of a military court in 1977 that he was not guilty of subversive acts. The Argentine supreme court also concluded that Timerman was innocent, but authorities continued to keep him under house arrest. In September 1979, Timerman was stripped of his Argentine citizenship and expelled to Israel. [ ] 3.5(c)

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